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DEPARTMENT PASS TO EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

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SUBJECT: MFA OFFICIAL CRITICIZES GOZ FOR STATE OF U.S.
RELATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell, Reason 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) In a March 27 courtesy call on the Ambassador, the outgoing MFA Head of Protocol and new DCM at the Zimbabwean Embassy in Washington, Gideon Gapare, told the Ambassador that the GOZ wanted dialogue with the U.S. The Ambassador responded that the U.S. was also open to dialogue but that the GOZ had to be prepared to make concrete reforms if dialogue were to lead anywhere. He said he had made exactly these points in an interview in The Standard, which had been published the day before. In the interview, the Ambassador added that he had lamented that he had to respond to the government's talk of bridge-building through the press, but he had no choice given the GOZ decision to deny him access to GOZ officials.

12. (C) Gapare said the professional diplomats at the MFA were unhappy with the decision to limit the Ambassador's access. He attributed the state of affairs to Foreign Minister Mumbengegwi, who he said had proven a disappointment. Far from the professional diplomat they had expected from his previous postings in London and Brussels, Mumbengegwi had proven to be a hard liner who paid more attention to Zimbabwe's internal domestic politics than to maintaining dialogue. Gapare also accused the Ministry of Information of meddling in Zimbabwe's foreign affairs and said their influence at State House had been responsible for much of the downturn in relations.

13. (C) The Ambassador noted that we had made an effort to maintain a proper working relationship with the MFA and encouraged Gapare to do what he could to ensure the GOZ reciprocated. In that regard, he expressed disappointment at the recent decision to deny a member of Senator Feingold's staff a visa to visit Zimbabwe. Gapare agreed the visa refusal had been a mistake and said he was working to get to the bottom of it and prevent any recurrence. He said that in concert with Ambassador Mapuranga to be able to deepen dialogue in Washington. He also promised to try to restart contact between the MFA and the Embassy at the working level before his departure for Washington.

Comment

14. (C) In his previous assignment, Gapare has worked closely

with MFA Permanent Secretary Bimha, the senior career diplomat at the MFA, and can be presumed to have been speaking on Bimha,s behalf. We are encouraged therefore that Gapare was so open about the dysfunction within the GOZ in general and the MFA in particular on foreign policy issues. We are also encouraged that he was able to get permission to call on the Ambassador and choose to regard this as a signal that Bimha and the MFA,s professionals want to stabilize bilateral relations. We will know better by the end of the week whether they can, as we continue to await official GOZ reaction) for that matter any GOZ reaction) to the Ambassador,s interview.

DELL